

WHAT KIND OF FRUIT DO YOU BEAR?

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A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matthew 7:18, 20).

In these verses, our Lord Jesus teaches us about fruit identification. This truth is especially relevant in these last days. The church of the Lord Jesus spends an enormous amount of time judging others by their gifts. Yet the Lord tells us that we are to know others by their fruit. I like to call this fruit inspection, as it is not judging. Judging is making an assessment about someone's character from one's own opinion. Fruit inspection is seeing what is there and identifying what you see.

We must be ever vigilant that we do not neglect the production of the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives. We spend time trying to find our ministry; I am convinced that we need to discover our fruit. Ministry can be performed; fruit is cultivated by the Holy Spirit. I am sure that we can make a greater impact for Christ as we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit and demonstrate His fruit.

In the book of Galatians, the Apostle Paul teaches us about the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. After confronting the Christians in Galatia regarding their return to fleshly things, he teaches them about the works of the flesh. In his description of the works of the flesh the Apostle makes it very clear that they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. This type of behavior must not be the "norm" for the child of God. We must grow beyond this and strive for true Christ like behavior.

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (1 Peter 2:1-2)"

We are called to grow up in our salvation and remove those things that are not Christ honoring. Now I am aware that this will take some time, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to produce the righteousness that God requires. As a believer in Christ, we must strive for completion in Him. Our lives will be made richer as we "put off the old man and put on the new man which is in Christ Jesus." Hallelujah!

As a direct contrast, Paul tells us about the fruit of the Spirit. He speaks clearly; we do not need to struggle with the description.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23)."

My beloved brothers and sisters, make no mistake about it, the fruit of the Spirit is *love*. That is

right, LOVE. Paul goes on to tell us how we can recognize the manifestation of love:

- Joy- *gladness*
- Peace- *quietness or calm*
- Longsuffering- *forbearance*
- Gentleness- *kindness*
- Goodness- *virtue*
- Faith (*faithfulness to God*)- *dependability to God*
- Meekness- *humility*
- Temperance- *self control*

As we examine our lives, we must be mindful of God's Word. Being a child of God carries awesome responsibilities. We represent our Lord Jesus, in this world.

Let us therefore strive to develop the fruit of the Spirit in every area of our walk. Remember, "by their fruit you shall know them." †